

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FIRST MAJOR OPPOSITION REACTION TO OFFENSIVE

1. CHINH LUAN OF MARCH 21 CARRIED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT
ISSUED IN NAME OF 27 MEMEBER LOWER HOUSE OPPOSITION PEOPLES
SOCIETY BLOC.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

IN THE FACE OF THE SUDDEN CHANGE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S
POLICY BY HANDING OVER THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS TO THE
ENEMY AND PREPARING FOR AN ABANDONMENT OF REGION 1, WHICH
CAUSES MILLIONS OF VICTIMS TO LOSE THEIR LIVES AND PROPERTY
AND SHOCKS ALL VIETNAMESE PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE'S SOCIETY BLOCK:

A. DEMANDS THE GOVERNMENT ABANDON ITS POLICY OF COVERING UP
AND DECEIVING PUBLIC OPINION; IT MUST BE SINCERE WITH THE POPULATION
AND LET THEM CLEARLY KNOW ABOUT THE SITUATION TO PREVENT
THEM FROM BEING CONFUSED AND PANICKY WHEN EXTRAORDINARY
MEASURES (MUST BE TAKEN).

IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, WHEN LAND AND PEOPLE MUST BE ABANDONED,
PARTICULAR ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO THE ASSISTANCE OF THE
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VICITMS, AND LARGE-SCALE PLANS MUST BE WORKED OUT FOR THEIR

EVACUATION.

PUT ASIDE AND END DIVISIVENESS, ENMITY, FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS, STUDENTS AND NEWSPAPER CORRESPONDENTS DETAINED, RESTORE PUBLICATION RIGHTS TO CLOSED DOWN NEWSPAPERS, AND BRING ABOUT NATIONAL SOLIDARITY.

TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO CHECK THE MORAL DECAY OF THE MILITARY AND CIVILIANS AND THE DETERIORATION OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION.

B. (THE PEOPLE'S SOCIETY BLOC) APPEALS TO ALL PERSONS OF GOOD WILL TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR SHARE OF EFFORTS AND FINANCE IN THE ASSISTANCE OF WAR VICTIMS.

C. (THE PEOPLE'S SOCIETY BLOC) APPEALS TO THE TWO POWERS IN SOUTH VIETNAM TO THINK ABOUT THEIR BLOOD RELATIONSHIP TO END THE MUTUAL SLAUGHTER AND RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATION TABLE IN ORDER TO SEEK FOR A PEACEFUL SOLUTION BASED ON NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD.

C. FRIENDLY NATIONS OF VIETNAM ARE REQUESTED TO BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION FOR VN BASED ON THE PARIS AGREEMENT. END TEXT.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST PUBLIC REACTION OF A MAJOR OPPOSITION GROUP SINCE THE FULL DIMENSIONS OF THE NEW OFFENSIVE HAVE BECOME CLEAR. PSB'S STATEMENT CAREFULLY AVOIDS ATTACKING COMMUNISTS AND INSTEAD REPEATS STANDARD APPEAL FOR BOTH SIDES TO CEASE SLAUGHTER AND NEGOTIATE A PEACEFUL SOLUTION WITHIN PARIS ACCORDS WITH SUPPORT OF FRIENDLY POWERS. NEVERTHELESS, THE STATEMENT IS RELATIVELY CONSTRUCTIVE IN CONTRAST WITH THE PSB'S RECENT RADICAL RHETORIC WHICH INCLUDED QUESTIONING WHETHER FALL OF PHUOC LONG WAS PART OF SECRET DEAL TO IMPLEMENT PARIS AGREEMENT AND APPEALING TO CONGRESS TO CUT OFF AID AS LONG AS THIEU REMAINS PRESIDENT. LATEST STATEMENT, HOWEVER, REFLECTS CLEAR PSB'S IDENTIFICATION AS PART OF THE NATIONALIST FAMILY. IN SHARP CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS OPPOSITION STATEMENT, DECLARATION REFRAINS FROM ANY CRITICISM OF GVN MILITARY PERFORMANCE AND ACCEPTS LIKELIHOOD FURTHER WITHDRAWALS WILL BECOME MILITARY NECESSITY. INSTEAD THEY ASK ONLY THAT ADEQUATE UNCLASSIFIED

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PROVISIONS BE MADE TO EVACUATE CIVILIANS WHO, THEY IMPLICITLY ASSUME, WILL FLEE TO THE SIDE OF GVN. PSB CRITICISM DOES OF COURSE ACCURATELY REFLECT WIDESPREAD UNEASINESS CAUSED BY GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE SO FAR TO ADEQUATELY EXPLAIN FULL SCOPE OF ATTACK AND GVN'S INTENTIONS FOR COPING WITH IT. END COMMENT. LEHMANN

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